

SAFETY BULLETIN

SB02-032: LIGHTNING YOUR BIGGEST WEATHER RISK

Approximately 360,000 bolts of lightning bombard the earth every hour. It can be devastating, spectacular and unpredictable. More than 600 persons in the U.S. are killed each year by lightning strikes. Following these basic safety rules will help save your life when lightning threatens:

1. Stay Indoors. Do not venture outside unless absolutely necessary.
2. Stay away from open doors or windows, fireplaces, radiators, stoves, metal pipes, sinks, and plug-in electrical equipment such as radios and television sets.
3. Do not use plug-in electrical equipment such as hair dryers.
4. Do not take a shower or a bath. Water and copper tubing are excellent conductors of electricity.
5. Do not use the telephone unless absolutely necessary.

If you must go outdoors, use the following precautions:

1. Do not work on fences, telephone lines, pipelines, or structural steel fabrications.
2. Do not use metal objects such as fishing rods or golf clubs.
3. Do not handle flammable materials in open containers.
4. Get out of water and off of beaches (do not continue swimming). Get off small boats.
5. Stay in your automobile if traveling. Automobiles offer excellent lightning protection as long as your radio is off and the antenna is down.
6. Seek shelter in a building. If no building is available, your best protection is a cave, ditch, or canyon. Never take shelter under a single tree in an open field (stay away from unprotected areas such as covered shelters on golf courses, picnic areas, or campgrounds).
7. Never touch downed power lines. Dial 911 or the local power company immediately to ensure that the line is turned off to eliminate potential hazard.

Final Tips

- Have a lightning plan.
- Suspend activity for 30 minutes after last observed strike.
- Injured persons do not carry an electrical charge and can be handled safely.